

Notes on Parish Partnership Meeting held on September 5th at Tonbridge and Malling Council Offices

Present: Cllr Nicholas Heslop in Chair, Cllr Martin Coffin, and Chief Executive Julie Bilby

Planning issues

Prior to the meeting I sent the email below.

“Dear Sirs,

With regard to the Parish Partnership Panel meeting tomorrow, September 5th.

I shall be representing Aylesford Parish Council tomorrow and they have asked me to pursue some questions we have long had about planning decisions, namely:

What they have been asking for is:

- a. An explanation of the process of determination of planning applications by TMBC including what you take into account in arriving at your decisions whether taken by Officers or Members. The Council would particularly seek to understand what account is taken of the Parish Council’s views particularly as they have an understanding of the local position.
- b. Most of the views of the Council when objecting to planning applications are not being taken on board in that the final decision is to approve. The Parish Council would like to know what it needs to do to get its views expressed more clearly for consideration in the decision-making process. To help understand this, the Council would appreciate an analysis of a few examples from our area where you have both agreed with our view of refusal and where you have disagreed. The Council wants to know whether it is getting its message across or are we approaching it in a wrong way?

Regards

Tom Shelley”

The initial reaction was an email:

“Good Afternoon Mr Shelley

Thank you for your email. Unfortunately, the deadline for submitting agenda items for this meeting has passed (Friday 12 July) and there is no facility for Any Other Business at the Parish Partnership Panel.

However, I have been advised that the Kent Association of Local Councils can offer further guidance on these issues, as well as provide training which is tailored to reflect how parish councils should present their considerations on planning applications.

Thank you

Allison Parris”

Hence, I was somewhat surprised when Cllr Heslop called me out in meeting to ask what the problem was.

I attempted to briefly explain the problems, citing the example of planning objections to lack of car parking being over ruled, despite the obvious inadequacy of car parking provisions in the modern age. From the ensuing brief discussion, it became clear that a number of other parishes had experienced similar problems. David Lettington cited Kent Vehicle Parking Standards and said they often thought planning applications should be rejected but felt they were bound by regulations. Cllr

Heslop then suggested that KALC should provide some training for us on how to “Better frame” our objections so they stood a better chance of being maintained. Sarah Barker gave me her card and after asking me, said she would be writing to our clerk about this. Sarah.barker-kalc@outlook.com. I don't know how good the training is, but after 26 years as a journalist, I can vouch for the efficacy of such tactics as opening any statement with a single sentence crafted to deliver maximum impact, followed by one or two sentences to summarise details before launching into the main story.

Other matters

Parish councils were invited to share their experiences of Speedwatch. Comments were mainly favourable, people said it does have an effect, but it, “Needs a lot commitment”. The biggest problem is finding enough volunteers to do it. A mobile speed warner costs £7,000.

One parish councillor presented a small box of empty nitrous oxide cylinders to the police inspector?. He seemed surprised to learn from those present that the problem is widespread across the borough. He promised to do something through the schools. I also asked what the solution was to the problem of fly tippers normally using false number plates. (This has been my experience and that of local farmers). Somebody mentioned a traveller Mercedes with no plates at all, about which nothing was done, despite the presence of a police officer. The police inspector did not offer a satisfactory answer to this problem. He also said that there had been a space of shed break ins and car key thefts. The persons responsible for stolen motorcycles in Hadlow had been caught. Travellers expelled from land in Ightham under Section 61 had moved straight onto Platt where they were served with Section 61 again.

Local Plan: The council has received a letter from the inspector and two letters have been sent in response. There is a local examination page on the TMBC website. <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk/services/planning-and-development/planning/planning-local-plans/local-plan-examination-contents>. The consultation will commence at the beginning of October. No date has been set for the examination.

Cllr Harry Rayner said that uncertainties were making it very difficult for KCC to plan ahead. KCC has allocated £250,000 for fly tipping enforcement. TMBC's first recycling centre is at least a year away. Cuxton is requiring i.d. from users. The new waste collections leaflet to be sent out is bright yellow. There will be new collection days. 15 grants have been awards under the Shop Front Improvement Scheme. One of the recipients is Aylesford Village Store. The contact is Jeremy Whitaker. There will be a jobs fair on October 15th. The draft climate change strategy is scheduled for May 2020. The council invites input. Brown bin uptake is 42%, the highest in Kent. Cardboard can be tied up and put next to the box so it can also be collected.

Tom Shelley